IN THE CLAIMS

1-16 (canceled)

17. (new) A deployable apparatus for creating a local reduction in wave height, the apparatus comprising at least one mat-like structure including:

a buoyant or semi-buoyant upper surface portion operatively disposed at or near the water surface; and

a plurality of drag inducing elements disposed below the upper surface portion, wherein the elements are collapsible or compressible when the apparatus is not in use.

18. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the upper surface portion comprises a plurality of flexibly linked buoyant or semi-buoyant sections .

19. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the upper surface portion comprises a single sheet of flexible buoyant or semi-buoyant material.

20. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, further comprising a plurality of flexible fluid retaining structures disposed thereon.

21. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the flexible fluid retaining structures comprise a network grid of pipes or tubes.

22. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein fluid is maintained in the flexible structures under pressure.

23. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, further comprising at least one pump for supplying fluid to said flexible fluid retaining structures.

24. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein the fluid is water.

25. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein at least one of the drag inducing elements comprise shaped elements formed from a compressible material.

26. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein at least one of the drag inducing elements comprise collapsible drogue anchors.

27. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein at least one of the drag inducing elements are inflatable with an inflating fluid.

28. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 27, wherein the inflating fluid is water.

29. (new) A deployable apparatus for creating a local reduction in wave height, the apparatus comprising at least one mat-like structure including:

a buoyant or semi-buoyant upper surface portion operatively disposed at or near the water surface;

a plurality of drag inducing elements disposed below the upper surface portion, wherein the elements are collapsible or compressible when the apparatus is not in use; and

a plurality of flexible fluid retaining structures disposed thereon the apparatus,

wherein inflating fluid for the inflatable drag inducing elements is supplied from the flexible fluid retaining structures.

30. (new) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein the leading end of the apparatus is inclined downwardly with respect to incident waves.

31. (new) A system for deploying and recovering an apparatus for creating a local reduction in wave height comprising:

an apparatus as claimed in claim 1;

a deployment vessel;

a storage device on the vessel for the apparatus; and

means for paying out and recovering the apparatus.

32. (new) A system as claimed in claim 31, wherein the storage device is a storage reel about which the apparatus is wound when not in use